

NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTION



INMATE HANDBOOK

Copies of New York City Board of Correction & State Commission
Minimum Standards are available in all Facility Law Libraries.

REVISED 12/07

INTRODUCTION

This Handbook will inform you about many of the programs and services available to you. The rules that you must follow will be published in an Inmate Rulebook, under separate cover.

When you come into a Department of Correction jail (DOC, Department), you will be given a DOC ID number, called a “book and case” number. You will also get an ID card, which you must have with you at all times, and have clipped to your clothes so that it can be easily seen any time you leave your housing area.

You have the right to be safe in jail. If you are the victim of any threats or actual violence, or you feel unsafe, or you think you may hurt yourself, the DOC has ways to help you. (Read the section in this Handbook on “Safety & Victims’ Services” for more information.)

Although safety and security always come first in jail, you should also know that the DOC offers many valuable programs and services to you while you are incarcerated, including health, educational, vocational, work, and counseling programs. Remember that not every program is available to every inmate and may not be offered in every facility. This introduction mentions some of those programs and services; the Handbook describes them in more detail; you can also learn more about them in the Programs Office of your facility. To go to the Programs Office, ask your Housing area Officer for an interview slip, which you should fill out and return to him

The programs and services that you can use while you are in a Department jail, include:

Medical/Mental Health Services.

You can see a doctor or physician’s assistant, a mental health professional, or a dentist by signing up for sick call. In an emergency, ask your housing officer to help you get to a doctor immediately. If you are HIV positive or want to take a voluntary HIV test, your facility has an HIV counselor who can help you arrange for a test or get medications. (For more information, read the “Health Services” section of this Handbook.)

Education

- If you are under 21 years old, you may go to school; in fact, if you are 16,17 or 18 years old, and do not have a high school diploma or a GED, you must go to school while you are in jail. Some facilities have adult education programs for students over 21 years old. (Read the “Educational Services” section of this Handbook to learn more.)

Family Events

- If there is an important event in your family (like a death or very serious illness), if you wish to get married, or if you want to visit with your children in foster care, you may contact the Counselor in your facility. (See the “Family Events” section of this Handbook; also see the “Counseling Services” section to learn how the counselors can help you.)

Religious Services

- Chaplains from the Jewish, Muslim, Catholic, and Protestant faith groups work for the Department in each of the jails. Each facility has regular services for all four faiths. If your faith is not represented, contact your facility chaplain and he or she will make the necessary arrangements. (Read the “**Religious Rights**” section of this Handbook for more information.)

Law Libraries

- You can do legal research while you are in jail. Every facility has a Law Library that you are entitled to use for two hours a day, five days a week, Tuesday through Saturday. The Law Library also has copies of the rules and court orders that describe your rights in jail, including the New York City Board of Correction Minimum Standards and the New York State Commission on Correction Minimum Standards. (Details about how to get to the Law Library, including the hours when it is available, are in the “**Law Library**” section of this Handbook.)

Grievance Process

- If you have an issue that cannot be resolved after you have spoken with your Housing Officer, Counselor, Legal or Grievance Coordinator, you may present a complaint in writing to the Grievance Coordinator in your facility who will guide you through the steps to a formal resolution. You may submit a complaint about things that directly affect you such as Department policies, how the policies are carried out or someone else’s behavior, including an officer. (See the **Grievance Procedures** section of this Handbook.)

Discharge Planning

- Finally, the Department wants to help you to avoid coming back to jail and help make it easier for you to transition back to your community. This help is called discharge planning. You should have received a copy of the *Connections* guide when you were first admitted to the Department. This resource guide lists programs and services that are available to you in New York City and also has a section to help you obtain a job after your release.
- If you did not receive *Connections* at intake, ask your Correctional Counselor for a copy. All Law Libraries also have copies of “*The Center for Community Problem Solving Reentry Guide*” available for your use. If you are a sentenced inmate who is housed in either the Rose M. Singer Center or the Eric M. Taylor Center, your facility offers discharge planning services that focus on helping you get a job and housing, and to stay off drugs and alcohol. (See the “**Discharge Planning**” section of this handbook to find out more.)

We hope that this Handbook will help you to take advantage of the Department’s programs and services and avoid acting in ways that threaten your own safety, the safety of staff or other inmates. If you have a question about Department programs or rules, ask any uniformed staff member.

- Request a copy of the BOOKLET: "Out of Sight, Not Out of Mind: Important Information for Incarcerated Parents whose Children are in Foster Care" from the Counselor or the Administration for Children's Services.
- Request to view the VIDEO "Out of Sight, Not Out of Mind" from your Counselor
- CALL the ACS Office of Advocacy's Parents' and Children's Rights Helpline collect at: 212-619-1309

FOOD SERVICES – SPECIAL DIETS

You are allowed to have a therapeutic diet prescribed by a physician or physician's assistant. If you believe your medical condition warrants a therapeutic diet, you should arrange with your housing area officer for an appointment with the medical staff.

You are allowed to observe reasonable dietary laws or fasts established by your religion. The department will provide you with the appropriate foods consistent with the established religious dietary laws as sanctioned by Ministerial Services.

GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE

The Department's Inmate Grievance Resolution Program is available to you if you have a complaint or concern about anything involving your incarceration. If you cannot resolve issues of concern by speaking with those involved, you may submit a complaint to the Inmate Grievance Resolution Committee (IGRC). The grievance procedure is not an adversarial process, but an attempt to resolve disputes fairly and equitably within existing regulations. You may use the grievance procedures to resolve issues related to a specific incident or related to Department policies or how the policies are carried out, or the fact that there is no policy or rule about something affecting your incarceration.

How to Submit a Grievance

Complete an "Inmate Grievance Interview Slip" (Form #143) or an "Inmate Grievance Form" (Form #7101), which are available through Inmate Grievance Resolution Committee staff members and office, Housing Area Officers, Law Libraries and the Counseling Office.

Submit the grievance by giving it to an Inmate Grievance Resolution Committee staff member, dropping the grievance in the Grievance Box or bringing it to the Grievance Officer.

In the event you cannot access the Grievance form (Form #7101), a complaint can be written on any paper and will be transferred onto the appropriate form when Grievance personnel interview you.

Time Deadline to Submit Grievance

You must submit your grievance within 10 days (excluding weekends and holidays) of the time the event or issue you are complaining about occurred, or the issue came to your knowledge.

How the Grievance Procedure Works

Step 1: The IGRC will investigate and try to resolve your grievance without a hearing. If you are not satisfied with the informal resolution, or do not receive a response to your grievance from the IGRC within five days (excluding weekends and holidays), you may request a formal hearing.

Step 2- Warden Level: If you are not satisfied with the determination from a hearing, you may appeal to the Warden.

Step 3 – Central Office Review Committee (CORC): If you are not satisfied with the Warden's decision, you may appeal to the CORC.

Step 4 – Board of Correction (BOC): If you are not satisfied with the CORC decision, you may appeal to the BOC.

Additional Information About the Grievance Procedure in Directive 3375R

If you do not receive a response to your grievance at any step of the Grievance Procedure within the time period required in Directive 3375R-A, you may proceed to the next step of the Grievance Procedure.

More detailed information on the timeframes and process for all the steps in the procedure is included in Directive 3375R. Copies of this Directive are available at the Grievance Office and the Law Library.

Confidentially and Accessibility

Grievance files are confidential and are kept in a locked area for use by IGRC staff. Inmates, who do not speak or write English, and inmates with disabilities, will be provided with necessary assistance to use the grievance procedure.

Non-Grievance Complaints

Some issues are not grievable. These include complaints of assault or harassment by a staff person, which the IGRC will refer to the commanding officer for necessary action, issues that are in litigation and issues that do not directly affect you. If you are unsure whether an issue is grievable, you should file a grievance. The IGRC will then determine whether the complaint is grievable.

HEALTH SERVICES

Regular medical, mental health, and dental services, as well as specialty medicine and dental services, medical and mental health counseling, methadone maintenance, detoxification, and other substance abuse services are available to you while you are incarcerated in the N.Y.C. Department of Correction, Monday through Friday. Emergency services are available at any